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Intercultural relations among migrants from Caucasus and Russians in Moscow

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ABSTRACT

This study examines intercultural relations in post-Soviet Russia. Russia currently has the world's second highest number of immigrants with most migrants coming from the former Soviet Union, mainly the Central Asian and South Caucasian states. The research was carried out in Moscow, which is the most attractive destination for these immigrants. The paper presents the findings of an empirical study with migrants ($N = 378$) and residents of Moscow ($N = 651$) examining their intercultural relations, including their acceptance of multicultural ideology, intercultural contacts, intercultural strategies and mutual adaptation. The study was guided by three general hypotheses: the *integration,* the *multicultural* and the *contact* hypotheses. Data processing was carried out using path analysis, separately for migrants and Muscovites. For both samples, multicultural ideology predicts the strategy of integration positively, and of assimilation negatively. Intercultural contacts predict both acculturation strategies positively for migrants, but not for Muscovites. For migrants, both strategies positively predict life satisfaction, and integration predicts better sociocultural adaptation. For Muscovites, integration predicts life satisfaction. These specific findings fully support the two underlying hypotheses: integration and multicultural for both groups and contact hypothesis only for migrants. Multicultural ideology has positive relation to intercultural contacts of Muscovites and has indirect positive impact on intercultural strategies of migrants. Models demonstrated similar as well as different psychological processes underlying mutual acculturation and intercultural relations in the two groups. The similarities suggest that efforts should be directed at developing a multicultural ideology and facilitating intercultural contacts between migrants and members of the larger society.

1. Introduction

All contemporary societies are now culturally plural, with many ethnic, cultural, and religious groups attempting to live together in one civic space. Scholars in many disciplines have examined how a reasonable degree of mutual acceptance can be achieved among these groups. Psychologists have also examined these issues for many years using concepts such as ethnic attitudes, multicultural ideology, contact and prejudice (e.g., Berry, Kalin, & Taylor, 1977; Dixon & Levine, 2012;

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Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011). This study continues this psychological approach, while being rooted in the conceptualizations and findings available from these other disciplines.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia and other former Soviet republics faced new challenges of achieving mutual acceptance and adaptation among members of the larger society and members of other ethnic and migrant groups. The objective of this study was to examine these intercultural relationships in the Russian Federation. In this paper, we first portray the current context of intercultural relations, including ethnic diversity and immigration in contemporary Russia. We then present the theoretical background to the study, outlining three general hypotheses: *integration, multicultural,* and *contact* and specific predictions about intercultural relations between migrants and Muscovites. Then follows a description of the research methods and the results of path analyses. In the discussion, we consider the findings in relation to the specific predictions, and their relevance to the three general hypotheses from which they were derived. Finally, we consider the limitations of the study and implications of these findings for improving the mutual acculturation and intercultural relations in the Russian Federation.

1.1. Context of intercultural relations in Russia

Although ethnic Russians constitute the bulk (81%) of the population (All-Russian Population Census, 2010), the Russian Federation is one of the most multicultural societies in the world having more than 100 ethnic and cultural groups. The Russian Federation is the second largest destination country for international migrants in the world. It receives over 11 million migrants, which is nearly five percent of all international migrants in the world (International Organization for Migration, 2014).

The nation states that previously were republics of the former Soviet Union account for most of the inflow with the relative contribution of Central Asian countries continuously on the rise (Vishnevskiy, 2011). In addition, the population of central Russia perceives ethnically-different migrants from Russia's republics of North Caucasus as strangers (Lebedeva & Tatarko, 2013). In recent years, problems of mutual intercultural relations between migrants and the Russian population have resulted in growth of xenophobia, as well as ethnic and religious intolerance (Lebedeva & Tatarko, 2013). The government, as well as members of all ethnocultural groups, are faced with the need to develop policies on migration, intercultural relations and mutual adaptation.

1.2. Theoretical background and research hypotheses

1.2.1. The integration hypothesis

Berry (1980, 2003) has suggested that there are four ways to think about how to live together in culturally-diverse societies. These have been termed intercultural strategies and expectations. They are based on people's orientations to two intercultural issues: maintaining one's cultural heritage and having contact with others outside one's group. These preferences may be held by members of non-dominant groups (termed *intercultural strategies*) which indicate how they wish to live interculturally. They may also be held by members of the dominant society (termed *intercultural expectations*), which refers to how they would like all ethnocultural groups to live interculturally. These strategies have been termed assimilation, integration, separation and marginalization. Two of these (assimilation and integration) emphasize a preference for intercultural contact, but they differ on the promotion of heritage cultural maintenance: Integration seeks to maintain heritage cultures within a multicultural society, while assimilation does not value cultural maintenance. The other two (separation and marginalization) represent an avoidance of intercultural contact, and are not assessed in the present study. Research has assessed how these strategies are related to *adaptation,* or how well individuals succeed in their own group and in the larger society. Two kinds of adaptation have been identified (Ward, 1996). First is adaptation that is primarily internal or *psychological* and is sometimes referred to as 'feeling well'. Second is *sociocultural* adaptation, which refers to 'doing well' in the activities of daily intercultural living, including social relations, success at school and work, and in community life when dealing with two cultures.

1.2.1.1. Integration strategy and expectation. Much research has shown that when immigrants prefer to maintain their heritage culture, and at the same time have relationships with others in the larger society (that is, when they prefer the integration way of living together), they will experience more positive psychological and sociocultural outcomes. This pattern of relationships has been reviewed by Berry (1997). More recently, Nguyen and Benet-Martínez (2013) carried out a meta-analysis across 83 studies and over 20,000 participants, who were members of non-dominant groups. They found that the integration strategy ('biculturalism' in their terms) has a significant and positive relationship with both psychological adaptation (e.g., life satisfaction, positive affect, self-esteem) and sociocultural adaptation (e.g., academic achievement, career success, social skills, lack of behavioral problems).

The reason the integration strategy is particularly adaptive may be due to existence of two kinds of social capital (Putnam, 2001) that are linked to having supportive social networks: *bonding* and *bridging* social capital. Bonding social capital is a set of social links within one's own group, while bridging social capital is a set of social links with other groups in the larger society. Integration may be a way of accessing both of these forms of social capital, offering members of non-dominant groups a route to adaptive success in plural societies (Perkins, Hughey, & Speer, 2002).